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Via Electronic Filing

Jocelyn G. Boyd, Esquire
Chief Clerk and Administrator
Public Service Commission of South Carolina
101 Executive Center Drive, Suite 100
Columbia, South Carolina 29210

Re: Public Service Commission review of South Carolina Code of Regulations 103-300, *et seq*., and 103-400, *et seq.*
Docket No. 2020-247-A

Dear Ms. Boyd,

Dominion Energy South Carolina, Inc. ("DESC" or "Company") appreciates the opportunity to submit reply comments as part of the Commission's review of Articles 3 and 4 rules and regulations related to Electric and Gas Systems. The Company offers comment to select proposals from other parties, and a decision to not offer comment on a proposal should not be taken as support for revision of the regulation. The Company looks forward to learning more about these comments at the Commission's workshop scheduled for April 16, 2021.

1. The Company supports the proposed revisions to Reg. 103-471(c) advanced by Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc. See Piedmont Letter p. 2-3. The same testing objectives can be achieved with testing every 24 months rather than 6 months while lessening the burden on the utility.

2. The Company agrees with certain revisions proposed by Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC and Duke Energy Progress, LLC. First, the Company agrees with a revision to Reg. 103-330(f). That regulation currently requires posting of rate schedules and rules related to service of the electrical utility in each office of the utility. As noted in its comment letter, the Company no longer operates such local offices. Positing of such information on the utility's website accomplishes the same goal and eliminates any confusion caused by the existence of regulations over non-existent Company offices.

Second, the Company also agrees with Duke's revisions to Reg. 103-339. This change will conform the regulation to currently approved Company practice.

Third, the Company joins in Duke's proposal to revise Reg. 103-352(g) but provides one suggested edit. Duke proposes to revise that section as follows:

103-352. Procedures for Termination of Service.

g. For remote and non-remote capable meters, electric service may be terminated ~~only on~~ Monday through ~~Thursday~~ Friday between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. ~~unless provisions have been made for the availability of the acceptance of payment and the reconnection of service. Electric service may not be terminated on the day preceding any day on which the electric utility's collection offices are closed, unless provisions have been made for the availability of the acceptance of payment and the reconnection of service.~~ For non-remote capable meters, where a site visit is necessary to disconnect service, ~~A~~all employees of electrical utilities assigned to terminate service shall be authorized to ~~accept payment from customers subject to termination of service~~ allow customers time to make an acceptable payment or in lieu thereof, at the electrical utility's option, allow such customer at least one full working day beyond the initial date set for termination the opportunity to make satisfactory arrangements on the account ~~at the offices of the electrical utility~~; provided, however, that in certain areas where it has been determined by the electrical utility that the safety of its employees warrants it, those employees shall not be required to accept payments from customers subject to termination.

See Duke Letter p. 6. The Company requests that the highlighted section of the first sentence remain in the revised Reg. 103-352. That section provides needed flexibility to the utility and the customer. The Company otherwise agrees with the revisions offered by Duke.

3. The Company next addresses some of the proposed revisions offered by the Department of Consumer Affairs. The Department first suggests a revision to Reg. 103-330 that would reduce the 60-day time to provide customers the explanation of available rates. See DCA Letter p. 2. The Department does not propose what time frame it prefers. Regardless, the Department's suggestion is not necessary because the Company makes its rate schedules available online 24-hours a day and 7 days a week. A customer can access that information at any time. The revision is likewise unnecessary because the Company already exceeds the 60-day time in Reg. 103-330 and provides the explanation of available rates to customers within 30 days. The Company understands that other utilities also provide the information within 30 days.

The Department next suggests adding a date-certain to the disconnection of service regulation found in Reg. 103-341. See DCA Letter p. 2. This proposed revision is likewise unnecessary because of Company practice. Upon receipt of a disconnect request, the Company works to accomplish the disconnect that same day. In situations when the Company cannot access the meter due to an unforeseen circumstance or dangerous condition at the meter, the Company will accomplish the disconnect as soon as the situation has been remedied. The Company is unaware of a situation when a customer had to pay for service unnecessarily after a disconnect request.

The Department also seeks to shorten the period a customer has to correct a bill discrepancy prior to termination of service under Reg. 103-342 and similar language of Reg. 103-442. See DCA Letter p. 2. The Department prefers a hard timeframe for the disconnect if the customer cannot remedy the bill issue. Id. A hard deadline would actually harm the customer. Company practice is to not send one notice to a customer and then terminate service. Rather, the Company attempts to contact customers in order to proactively help the customer avoid termination. Customers can miss notices or communications so a "reasonable time" affords the Company the ability to make other attempts to help the customer to remedy the issue. A hard deadline would preclude that assistance and, as noted, actually be detrimental to the customer. The Company believes Reg. 103-342 and Reg. 103-442 as written offer maximum benefit to the customer.

The Department proposes changes to Reg. 103-352 and Reg. 103-452, which address procedures for termination of service. See DCA Letter p. 3. The Company will respond to each suggestion in turn and illustrate why each proposal is unnecessary.

The Department first asks to lengthen the period prior to disconnection of service from 10 days to 30 days for the utility to provide the notice of termination. Id. This revision should be rejected. The Company does not initiate disconnects on day 11 after issuance of the notice and instead endeavors to work with customers to solve the issue that could lead to disconnect, namely a bill arrearage. In practice, the Company has designed its procedures to give customers time in excess of the 10-day notice requirement to cure any arrearage before disconnection of service would take place in a manner consistent with Commission regulations. A shift in the notice deadline to 30 days prior to service would adversely impact the customer. The customer would then have another 30 day period in which to accrue a higher arrearage balance and thus make it more difficult for the customer to cure the arrearage. More disconnects would actually occur with a lengthened notice window. Moreover, higher unpaid arrearages results in uncollectable balances which would then be passed down to other customers during the next general rate proceeding.

The next proposed revision seeks to amend Reg. 103-352.3(b) and Reg. 103.452.3(b) by extending the non-disconnect window for special needs customers. See DCA Letter p. 3. The Department asks for an extension to June through September "due to the potential for extreme heat during these months." Id. This is unnecessary for two reasons. First, state law already precludes a utility from disconnecting service of all customers when temperatures reach certain temperature thresholds. See S.C. Code Ann. § 58-27-2520. That section also requires the utility to "establish written procedures for termination" of service "for a special needs account customer at any time and for all residential customers during weather conditions marked by extremely cold or hot temperatures." Second, these procedures are located on the Company's website and explain when disconnects will be suspended due to weather.

The Department further requests that Reg. 103-352.3(b) and Reg. 103.452.3(b) require the utility to provide a list of local service assistance agencies or have the customer call 211. See DCA Letter p. 3. The Company already does this. The information is provided to customers prior to termination and readily accessible on the website 24/7.

The Department likewise asks to extend the notice requirements in Reg. 103-352.4 and 103-452.4. See DCA Letter p. 3. The Company does not realize more in actual payment when the customer has a longer timeframe to pay. Simply put, there is no correlation between time to pay and an increase in payments by customers.

The Department lastly requests Reg. 103-352.g and Reg. 103.452.g be revised to require a utility to "inform customers if they live" in "certain areas where it has been determined by the electrical utility that the safety of its employees warrants it, those employees shall not be required to accept payments from customers subject to termination." See DCA Letter p. 4. This revision is unnecessary because it would treat certain customers differently based merely on the location of the property receiving service.

More importantly, the revision is unnecessary because the Company does not accept any payments in the field. Instead, the Company utilizes the additional language in subsection g to allow customers an additional "full working day" to make payment prior to disconnection. See Reg. 103-352.g ("All employees of electrical utilities assigned to terminate service shall be authorized to accept payment from customers subject to termination of service or in lieu thereof, at the electrical utility's option, allow such customer at least one full working day beyond the initial date set for termination the opportunity to make satisfactory arrangements on the account at the offices of the electrical utility") (emphasis added). This revision is also unnecessary in light of the AMI technology because the utility will have the capability to disconnect and reconnect service remotely, if necessary.

Upon reflection of the Department's proposed revisions, it appears that the Department may not be familiar with the Company's practices and procedures taken to ensure our customers do not face the situations raised by the Department. The Company would be happy to meet with the Department to explain those practices and procedures to show how the Company goes to great lengths to provide excellent customer service and for the benefit of those customers. That explanation should alleviate the hypothetical concerns raised by the Department and render those proposed regulatory revisions unnecessary.

4. The Southern Environmental Law Center, Upstate Forever, and Friends of Beaverdam Creek offer a regulation to apply "in advance" to the construction of proposed gas pipelines in South Carolina. See SELC Letter p. 2. The Commission lacks the authority to implement the proposed regulation. Under South Carolina law, the General Assembly made a policy choice to authorize the Commission to solely determine whether the costs associated with construction of a gas pipeline were reasonably and prudently incurred. The Commission does so during a RSA proceeding created under state law. The Commission cannot exceed or alter its statutorily delegated jurisdiction on this issue.

But that is exactly what SELC's proposed regulation seeks. SELC asks the Commission to alter the policy enacted by the General Assembly and create a new policy—a "pre-approval" process for gas pipelines by the Commission. The Commission must reject this proposed regulation and allow the General Assembly to make policy.

The proposed regulation also would have practical consequences for the State as well as local governments. The regulation would put South Carolina at a competitive disadvantage from an economic development standpoint. The Department of Commerce and local governments could not use "business ready" development sites as recruiting tools because utilities would not be able to install the necessary infrastructure. South Carolina needs developed infrastructure or those companies will simply choose a state where the infrastructure already exists.

The Company appreciates consideration of its comments by the Commission and looks forward to the continued dialogue for possible revisions to Articles 3 and 4. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

s/ *Michael J. Anzelmo*

Michael J. Anzelmo
Counsel for Dominion Energy South Carolina, Inc.

cc: K. Chad Burgess, Esquire and Matthew W. Gissendanner, Esquire